

Pair blame FBI in King death

Star-Telegram Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Two nationally known government critics claimed Tuesday that the FBI "should be considered the prime suspect" in the 1968 killing of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

Mark Lane, an assassinations researcher, and Dick Gregory, a comedian turned civil rights activist, made the allegations at a news conference to publicize their new book, "Code Name 'Zorro'—the Murder of Martin Luther King Jr."

They based their claim on a pattern of evidence either already on the public record or found through additional research which they say indicates the late FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, wanted King dead.

An FBI spokesman said the bureau would have "no comment" on the allegation that it conspired to have King killed.

THE BOOK alleges that "the survival of the fittest" (most foul)

• Dr. King's police protection was removed on the day of the assassination in a plot that involved city and federal authorities.

• An FBI unit in the Atlanta office which was referred to as the "destroy King squad" investigated and covered up the death of King, a Nobel Prize winner.

• King's convicted assassin, James Earl Ray, who pleaded guilty to the murder before publicly recanting the confession, was set up as a patsy by unnamed individuals.

While the book covers considerable material included in the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's report last year, it apparently includes some new "findings."

The book depicts a "cozy" relationship between the Memphis police department and the FBI, including the fact that a top police official was a good friend and former colleague of Hoover, and some other stuff.

It also says that a 21-year FBI veteran, Arthur Murtagh, recalls that when King was shot in Memphis, agents in the anti-King Atlanta unit expressed delight.

"They got 'Zorro' the —," Lane said of how one top FBI official reacted. "They finally got the —."

ZORRO, LANE said, was the FBI's code name for King.

At the news conference, Lane and Gregory also showed parts of a taped interview with Ray, who maintained his innocence.

Interviewed in his prison cell in Tennessee by Lane, Ray said he was coerced into pleading guilty by state and federal authorities who threatened to harm his brothers if he did otherwise.

That assertion was supported by Jerry Ray, the convicted killer's brother, who said a third brother, John Ray, is serving an 18-year sentence for a "bank robbery he didn't commit."

The Lane-Gregory book comes at a time at which the beleaguered House Committee on Assassinations appears to have overcome all congressional obstacles in its drive to determine who killed King and former President John Kennedy.

The assassinations panel, plagued by internal bickering and stiff congressional opposition, secured a \$2.5 million budget last week after trimming its initial request by \$4 million.

THE COMMITTEE lately has taken a low profile while it shops around for a new staff director to replace Richard Sprague, the controversial former head who quit on the eve of an important reconstitution vote in March.

One staffer said the current committee is like a "ship without a rudder sailing smoothly after a rough start."

world "has children."



—Associated Press Laserphoto

KING ASSASSINATION. . . Dick Gregory, left, Mark Lane, right, and Jerry Ray, brother of James Earl Ray, discuss a model of the Memphis, Tenn., motel where Martin Luther King was assassinated.